

## Section VII: Near Term Funding Priorities for Grant Programs

### 1. Introduction

The next phase of TIFB library grant funding should focus on these key goals in the order suggested:

- Promoting sustainability in hardware, software, information resources, and connectivity among local institutions, including securing the safety of these resources. The Needs Study Team assumes that the Library Working Group has already determined and acted on the paramount need to safeguard the TexShare/TLC database investment.
- Ensuring that all Texans enjoy basic access to electronic technology and information resources through their schools and libraries by completing connectivity to eligible entities.
- Finding strategies to deepen and broaden the learning opportunities for staff and members of the public that will bring about fuller use of the rich array of electronic resources now available in Texas libraries and that will be added in coming years.
- Achieving greater public awareness and use of TIFB funded online resources, training, and equipment.

### 2. Near Term Grant Programs

Suggested grant programs that would move toward these goals in the next 12-18 months:

- The Library Working Group should ask TIFB to develop a “sustainability planning grant program” that would provide specific funds to libraries for the purpose of developing a practical sustainability plan that moves toward local funding independence. These planning grants should go to existing grantees and could be either individual grants or collaborative grants. The Needs Study Team sees this as the most critical near term program, assuming that TexShare and TLC databases are securely funded, in light of the current funding outlook in the state. In addition, in order to ensure that sustainable systems are supported by a commitment to training, these planning grants should not only address hard assets requirements, connectivity needs, but training and support as well. A practical strategy might be one where the grant program encourages collaborative sustainability planning grant applications from several institutions in a community that have received prior TIFB grants and may, or may not have collaborated previously.
- There should be a special TIFB “Final Push Challenge” grant program created for the express purpose of connecting those library entities as yet unconnected. For example, this includes school libraries without computer equipment, an Internet connection, and/or TLC membership; unconnected public libraries and branches; and a very limited number of unconnected academic libraries. TIFB should complete the unfinished statewide library infrastructure to honor the promise of wide access across the state. However, at this stage of the TIFB program, this project should use a collaborative model described above in the recommendations. If libraries have not yet taken advantage of earlier grant cycles, the traditional methods will not be likely to work. Some communities may simply lack the resources to use or apply for TIFB funding unless they are drawn into a shared system or group. The proposed grant program could be managed in close collaboration with existing TIFB library grantees that may be in a position to assist those libraries that are not yet connected. This could be accomplished either by inviting unconnected libraries into collaboration or by managing their connectivity and service needs more directly. For example, a community college might work with an unconnected school library and/or public library in their regions, using a TIFB “Final Push Challenge Grant.” As an incentive to perform this vital

service, the assisting institution might receive priority for other TIFB program grants and/or additional equipment, connectivity, or training.

- The Library Working Group should encourage TIFB to fund a few targeted training goals that encourage the development and deployment of alternative training delivery methods such as those described above under Training Recommendations. These grants would ideally be awarded to TIFB grantees that have already developed or are developing local training that could be replicated statewide. These grants should go to institutions that already have significant investment in training skills and resources in order to take advantage of existing talent and make training available more rapidly. Likewise, the Library Working Group should urge TIFB to add some online learning databases to TexShare and TLC in order to quickly increase the availability of basic software training at the desktop level.